

Date

Mr. Andre G. Coudrain
Cashe Coudrain & Sandage
P.O. Drawer 1509
Hammond, Louisiana 70404

Re: Ethics Board Docket No. 2016-286

Dear Mr. Coudrain:

The Louisiana Board of Ethics, at its August 19, 2016 meeting, considered your request for an advisory opinion as to whether Hammond City Fire Chief John Thomas may accept an all-expense paid trip as part of winning the Liberty Mutual Firemark Award and whether the City of Hammond can accept a \$10,000 donation as part of the award. You stated that Liberty Mutual Insurance sponsors an award entitled the Liberty Mutual Firemark Award. According to documentation provided, persons may be nominated who are legal residents of the fifty United States and the District of Columbia who are 18 years of age or older and who are currently employed as a volunteer or career firefighter as of the time of entry. You stated that Chief John Thomas was nominated for the Liberty Mutual Firemark Award for Community Service, which is an award given to a firefighter who demonstrates a commitment to serving his community. According to documentation provided, the award recognizes firefighters who have given back to their communities beyond their daily responsibilities.

You stated that the City of Hammond has been informed that Chief John Thomas has won the Liberty Mutual Firemark Award for his outstanding community service. The City of Hammond will receive a \$10,000 donation and Chief Thomas will be provided an all-expense paid trip to New York City for four people. You stated that Liberty Mutual Insurance has no contractual, financial, or other business relationship with the City of Hammond or the Hammond City Fire Department.

The Board concluded, and instructed me to inform you, that the Code of Governmental Ethics would prohibit Hammond City Fire Chief John Thomas from accepting an all-expense paid trip to New York City from Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. **La. R.S. 42:1111A** prohibits a public employee from receiving anything of economic value, other than compensation and benefits from the governmental entity to which he is duly entitled, for the performance of the duties and responsibilities of his office or position. The receipt of an all-expense paid trip to New York City is not compensation or a benefit from Chief Thomas' governmental entity which he is duly entitled to receive for the performance of his job duties as a firefighter; however, he is only eligible to receive such trip because he is a firefighter.

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The Board also concluded, and instructed me to inform you, that the Code of Governmental Ethics would not prohibit the City of Hammond from receiving an unconditional donation from Liberty Mutual Insurance Company.

This advisory opinion is based solely on the facts as set forth herein. Changes to the facts as presented may result in a different application of the provisions of the Code of Ethics. The Board issues no opinion as to past conduct or as to laws other than the Code of Governmental Ethics. If you have any questions, please contact me at (800) 842-6630 or (225) 219-5600.

Sincerely,

LOUISIANA BOARD OF ETHICS

Tracy M. Barker
For the Board